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AN ^{JW.}
A P O L O G Y
FOR THE
English Dissenters,

BY THE
Confessions of Foreign Protestant
Churches; and particularly,
by Letters from that of *Geneva*.

Which may serve as an

A N S W E R

To several LETTERS from the
Pastors of the Church of *Geneva*,

TO THE
Archbishop of *Canterbury*, the Bishop of
London, and the University of *Oxford*;
with their Answers to them.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a Cloud of Witnesses,
let us lay aside every Weight, and the Sin that doth so easily beset us, and
let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus
the Author and Finisher of our Faith, &c. Heb. XII. 1, 2, 3.

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A N
A P O L O G Y, &c.

TO depend on Humane Testimonies in Controversies of Religion, is certainly inconsistent with the Spirit and Principles of the Reformation.

We cannot express our dislike of it better than in the Words of the Helvetick Confession, *Chap. 2.* where those excellent Churches say, ' They cannot endure in Controversies of Religion, or Points of Faith, to be urg'd with bare Sentences from the Fathers, or Determinations of Councils, much less with received Customs, the number of those who approve them, or the Prescription of time. Therefore they will admit of no other Judge in Matters of Faith but God himself, pronouncing in the Holy Scriptures what is true, what is false, what is to be follow'd, and what is to be avoided, so that they acquiesce in nothing but the Judgment of Spiritual Men founded on the Word of God.

Wou'd our Brethren, who compass Sea and Land to obtain Humane Testimonies against us, submit to this Apostolical Rule, the Controversies betwixt us might be more easily determin'd to our mutual Satisfaction, for they have been frequently told, that in Matters of Faith and Practice, wherein the unerring Word of God is to be our Judge at the last day, we can call no Man or Society of Men *Masters.*

But since they will appeal to Humane Testimonies, and sollicite for such against us, we cannot be blam'd for answering them at their own Weapons, and with such too, as

are as much preferable and better try'd then those they have of late thought fit to make use of against us, as the deliberate and constant Judgment of Foreign Protestant Churches in their respective Confessions, without respect to the present Controversie, are preferable to the Opinions of particular Men, or Sets of Men, obtain'd by those who have so much the Advantage of us as to worldly Grandeur, and the Countenance of Civil Authority. Besides the other Advantage they have taken against us, of representing the Case only in their own Favour, without calling upon us at the same time to represent our side of the Case to those whose Judgments they produce against us, and publish to the World with so much Pomp.

We shall therefore in the first place give the Judgment of Foreign Churches as to Episcopacy, or rather Prelacy, one of the grand Subjects of Debate betwixt us.

The Helvetick Churches in the 18th Chapter of their Confession express themselves as to Prelacy thus.

' There is given to all Ministers of the Church one,
' and an equal Power or Function. Certainly from the beginning Bishops or Presbyters govern'd the Church in common: None preferr'd himself to another, or usurp'd a greater Power or Dominion over his Fellow Bishops, being mindful of our Saviour's Words, *He that would be first among you, let him be your Servant*; they kept within the Bounds of Humility, and mutually assisted one another in governing and preserving the Church. In the meantime, for preserving of Order, one of the Ministers call'd together the Assembly, propos'd the things to be consulted on, took the Votes of the rest, and did his utmost to prevent Confusion; so we read St. Peter did in the Acts of the Apostles, yet he was not for that set over the rest, or indued with a greater Power. For Cyprian, the Martyr, *de simplicate Clericorum*, said very right, *The rest of the Apostles were the same as Peter, and indu'd with equal Honour and Power: But the beginning proceeds from Unity, that the Church may be demonstrated to be one.* St. Jerome says much the same in his Commentaries on Paul's Epistle to Titus, viz. *Before that by the instind of the Devil*

'vil there were Divisions or Parties in Religion, the
 ' Churches were govern'd by the Common Council of Presby-
 ' ters, but after every one thought that those he baptiz'd
 ' were his own and not Christs; it was decreed that one
 ' elected from among the Presbyters should be set over the
 ' rest, to whom the Care of the Church should belong, that the
 ' Seeds of Schisms might be taken away. But Jerome does not
 ' give out this as a Divine Decree, for he presently subjoins, as
 ' Presbyters are to know that they are subjected to him, who
 ' is set over them by the Custom of the Church, so Bishops
 ' must know that they are greater than Presbyters, rather by
 ' the Custom of the Church than by our Saviour's Appointment,
 ' and that they ought to govern the Church in common. So
 ' far he, therefore no Man can lawfully forbid us to return
 ' to the ancient Constitution of the Church, and to prefer
 ' it to Humane Custom.

The next is the Confession of the French Church Article
 29. wherein they express themselves thus, ' We believe
 ' that the Church ought to be govern'd by that Policy and
 ' Discipline which our Lord Jesus Christ has establish'd, to
 ' wit, that there be in the same Pastors, Presbyters or Elders,
 ' and Deacons, that the Purity of Doctrine may be pre-
 ' serv'd, Vices restrain'd, the Poor and other afflicted Peo-
 ' ple may be taken Care of, as occasion requires; and that
 ' Assemblies may be kept for the Edification of small and
 ' great, *Acts* 6. 4. *Eph.* 4. 11. *1 Tim.* 3. 1. *Tit.* 1. 5.

Article 30. ' We believe all true Pastors wherever they
 ' are, to be indu'd with the same and equal Power among
 ' themselves under that one only Head, and chief and only
 ' universal Bishop Jesus Christ; and therefore that it is not
 ' lawful for any Church to claim a Power or Dominion over
 ' another, *Matth.* 20. 26. & 18. 2. *2 Cor.* 2. 27. *1 Pet.*

5. 3.

The Churches of *Belgia*, or the *Netherlands*, in their
 Confession Article 30. express themselves thus, ' We be-
 ' lieve the true Church ought to be govern'd by that Spiri-
 ' tual Policy which God himself has taught in his Word;
 ' so that there be in it Pastors and Ministers who preach the
 ' Word and administer the Sacraments in Purity. That
 ' there

there be also Elders and Deacons to constitute an Ecclesiastical Synod, that by those Means true Religion may be preserv'd, and the true Doctrine every where retained and propagated, that Men given to Vices may have Spiritual Reproof, in order to a Reformation, and be restrain'd by a curb of Discipline, that the Poor and Afflicted may have Help and Consolation, according as their Necessity requires; for then all things will be done well and in order in the Church, when faithful and godly Men are chosen to govern the same according to the Appointment of St. Paul, 1 Tim. 3. & Tit. 1.

Article 31. We believe that Ministers, Elders and Deacons, ought to be called to their Functions, and promoted by the lawful Election of the Church, by the serious Invocation of God, and in that order and manner prescrib'd to us in the Word of God. But chiefly every one ought to beware that they thrust not themselves by unlawful Means into those Offices, for they must all wait till they be called by God himself, that they may have a certain Testimony of their Vocation, and know that it is from the Lord. But wherever there are Ministers of God's Word, they have all the same and an equal Power and Authority, as being all the Ministers of Christ, the only universal Bishop and Head of the Church. Moreover that this Holy Ordinance of God may not be violated or fall into Contempt, all Men ought to have an honourable Opinion of the Ministers of the Word, and Elders of the Church, for the sake of their Office, ought to maintain Peace with them, and as much as can be to abstain from Contentions and Quarrels.

'Tis also to be observed, that in the Harmony of Confessions we find nothing like our English Prelates in any of the Foreign Protestant Churches, in some of which the Clergy have no higher Title assign'd them but that of Ministers of the Word, who, as appears above, were all of equal Power and Authority. In others indeed we find Super-attendants and Super-intendants, the Word being used promiscuously to denote such as had the Care of the Churches in their several Districts committed to them, but that they were nothing

thing like our Bishops, nor look'd upon as an Order superior to that of Presbyters, is evident; for they were so far from being allow'd any Preference or Dominion over their Brethren, that in the Acts of the General Synod or Assembly of the Churches of *Poland* at *Cracow*, in 1573. the Ministers are mention'd before the Super-attendants: But to make it plain to a Demonstration, that they were nothing like our English Bishops, we shall give an Account of their Office, Power, and Way of Election, from the Acts of the Synod of *Xansen* in *Poland*, as we find it in the *Poloniae Consensus* in the *Harmony of Confessions*.

In every District there is to be chosen from among the Ministers, to be a Super-attendant or Spiritual Elder, such an one as is fit for the Office; and he is to be Elected in the Synod of the District by the Ministers and Elders, and if possible, the Super-attendant of the Neighbouring District is to preside at his Inauguration.

His Office was to perform the Ministerial Function to a fixed Flock, and to Educate a Catechist at the Charge of the Patrons of the District, and this Catechist was to apply himself carefully to the Office of the Ministry, and to Preach to the People, when the Super-attendant was abroad visiting the Churches or attending Synods. 2. The Super-attendant was to settle Ministers where it was necessary, in the Towns and Villages of his District, but with the Consent and Assistance of the Elders, as we find by the Conclusion of the Synod of *Detricko* in the *Poloniae Consensus*. 3. He was to visit the Ministers and their Flocks once a Year at least, having with him one or two Secular Elders or Deacons. 4. He was to execute his Office with utmost Diligence, to prevent the Churches being infected and disturbed by Teachers of false and heretical Doctrine. 5. When he was call'd to Synods of other Districts, he was to attend at the Charge of his own District. 6. He was to call and direct Synods in his own Diocese at stated times, for necessary Causes. 7. He was to receive Complaints if any should happen among the Brethren; and after having heard both sides, to determine and reconcile them by the Advice of the Elders in their Consistory, without infringing upon

upon the Laws. 8. He was to take care of the Catechists and young Men of good Parts, who might be fit for the Ministry. 9. He was to receive Letters from other Churches, or from any other Persons sent to the Churches of his District, and to answer them by the Advice of the Elders, especially of the Ministers and other Brethren in difficult Cases. 10. He was to continue in his Office from one Synod to another, and was to be continued, or another chosen in his Place, as the Synod thought fit.

Here 'tis fit to observe, that the Church of *Scotland* soon after the Reformation, made use of such Super-intendants, not that they thought 'em of Divine Institution, or necessary to be always continued, but because they were forc'd to it at that time; because if all Ministers had been oblig'd to reside constantly with their Flocks, the greatest part of the Kingdom would have been destitute of the Preaching of the Word, Ministers at that time were so scarce; therefore they selected Ten or Twelve to Preach and Plant Churches committed to their Charge: Their Form of Ordination was the same with that of other Ministers in all respects, and they were answerable to the Synods and Assemblies for their Behaviour, and to be continu'd or alter'd as they thought fit, as may be seen in *Calderwood's History of the Church of Scotland*, pag. 26, 27. and *Knox's History of the Reformation*, where the Form and Order of the Election of the Super-intendants, and all other Ministers, is set down at large, pag. 284. *London Edit. 1644.* But the Church of *Scotland* finding afterwards that the Court made use of those Super-intendants as a Step to reintroduce Prelacy, they laid them aside. And on this Occasion, 'tis proper to take notice of *Beza's* Opinion concerning Bishops, in his Letter from *Geneva* the 12th of *April 1572.* to Mr. *Knox*, who had informed him that the Court design'd to bring in Bishops. ' My dear *Knox*, (says he) I would have you and the other Brethren to remember what is before your Eyes: As Bishops brought forth the Papacy, so false Bishops, the Relicks of Popery, shall bring in Epicurism into the World. Let such as desire the Good and Safety of the Church take heed of this Pestilence; and since ye have put that Plague

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to flight betimes, I heartily beseech you never to admit it again, though it seem plausible, under the Pretence of keeping Unity, which Pretence deceiv'd the Antient Fathers, and even many of the best of them. This is still to be seen among his Epistles.

To this we shall subjoin the Opinion of foreign Churches concerning the Discipline of the Church of Scotland, which has of late been so much decry'd by some Men.

It is that Church's rare Privilege for which she is preferable to most, and on which Account her Name has been famous among Foreigners, that for about 54 Years she has retain'd and preserv'd Unity, with the Purity of Doctrine, without Schism or Heresy. The greatest support of this Unity, by the Mercy of God, was, that by degrees, together with the Doctrine, the Discipline of Christ and of the Apostles, was receiv'd as prescrib'd by the Word of God; and the whole Ecclesiastical Government, was, as far as possible, administred according to it. By this Means all the Seeds of Schisms and Errors, as soon as they begun to spring up, were stifled in the Birth, and extirpated. God of his infinite Goodness grant that his most Serene Majesty, and all Governors of Churches, and Magistrates, who ought to be Nursing Fathers to the Church, may perpetually preserve that Unity and Purity of Doctrine. *Harmony of Confessions, pag. 6. Edit. Genev. 1612.*

The *Bohemian Confession Article 9.* is against all Dominion of Ministers over the Church, for which they quote that of *Matth. 20. 25, 26. You know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them, and they that are great exercise Dominion upon them, but it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you let him be your Minister.* And that of *St. Peter, Not as Lords over God's Heritage, but as Examples to the Flock, 1 Pet. 5. 3.* And that of *St. Paul, 2 Cor. 1. 24. Not that we have Dominion over your Faith, but are Helpers of your Joy.* In that same Article those good old Reformers declare against Ministers employing themselves in Secular Affairs, and are so far from thinking the Power of Ordination to be lodg'd only, or chiefly in the Hands of a Bishop, that they order
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their Ministers to be ordain'd by the Elders, with Prayer, and Imposition of Hands, in the Congregation. And in their 14 Article they teach, that the Power of the Keys or Discipline is lodg'd in the Ministers of the Church.

The *Augsburg* Confession, in their Article *de potestate Ecclesiae*, allows no other Power to Bishops or Ministers but that of Preaching the Word, Administring the Sacraments, and censuring Offenders; and if they exercise any Power about Civil Causes, they declare that to be Human and not of Divine Authority, and therefore advise Church-men not to meddle with the Province of others.

The *Wirtemberg* Confession is so far from approving Bishops as a Superior Order to that of Presbyters, that in their Article *de Ordine*, They quote St. *Jerome* in his above-mention'd Commentary on *Titus*, where he says, A Bishop and a Presbyter are the same. Whence they say 'tis manifest, that except a Presbyter be instituted in the Church for the Function of Preaching, he can neither justly take upon him the Name of Presbyter or Bishop.

We have also the Sense of the *Walachrian* Churches in *Zealand*, and that of all the Reformed Churches in the *Netherlands*, concerning our English Episcopacy thus, ' We reject also that National and Provincial Form of a ' Church, introduc'd by Men, in which many Churches are ' united and subjected to a Cathedral Church, and depend ' upon one visible Pastor, who is Pastor and Lord of all o- ' ther Pastors, and inferior particular Churches, wherein ' the inferior Churches injoy God's Holy Ordinances and Ec- ' clesiastical Power by Derivation and Commission, from ' the Power and Jurisdiction of that Cathedral Church, or ' that National or Provincial Pastor and Bishop: For these ' are the Inventions of Antichrist, which bring Tyranny ' into the Church, and overthrow the Power granted by ' God to the Churches and Pastors.

This we find in their Book, intituled, *A Consideration of certain Controversies, at this time agitated in the Kingdom of England, concerning the Government of the Church, sent from the Churches of Walachria to the Synod at London. Dated from Midelburg in Zealand the 16th of October 1644. N. S.*

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Another Point of Government debated betwixt us and our Brethren of the Church of *England*, is the Office of those called *Ruling or Lay Elders*. As to which we have the Judgment of the *Polish Churches*, in the *Polonia Consensus*, contain'd in the Harmony of Confessions, thus,
 ' That there ought to be at least in every District, two or
 ' three Elders of the Nobility and Gentry, chosen by the
 ' free Suffrage of the Ministers, and afterwards Inaugura-
 ' ted by the Super-attendant and Ministers of the District.
 ' Their Office was carefully to observe, that the Ministers
 ' delivered True and Orthodox Doctrine with faithfulness
 ' and diligence, and that they liv'd accordingly : In case
 ' of Error or Scandal they were to reprove the Ministers,
 ' and to Suspend them for any enormous Crime, with the
 ' Consent of the Super-attendant, till the next Synod. They
 ' were also to attend Synods, and assist the Super-attendant
 ' in visiting the Churches ; they were likewise to take care
 ' of the Revenues of the Church, and that Ministers should
 ' have necessary Maintenance and convenient Habitations,
 ' and protect them from Injuries ; they were also to see
 ' the Canons of Synods put in execution, and to agree Dif-
 ' ferences among the Brethren, and to continue from
 ' Synod to Synod, or longer, as the Synod thought
 ' fit.

'Tis obvious to every Man, that those Elders are much the same with such as are chosen to assist in the General Assemblies of the Church of *Scotland*.

Then as to the Elders of particular Congregations, we have the Opinion of those Churches, thus : They were to restrain Disorders and Differences, and to determine Controversies among the Brethren, for nourishing Peace and Charity among them, and as much as in them lay to hinder their going to Law ; but if that could not be avoided, they were to assist the Brethren, and especially the poorer sort, and Orphans, so as the Suit might be manag'd without giving Offence to the Church. They were also to observe the Conversation of the Brethren at Home, that they might behave themselves according to their Christian Vocation ; and such as were faulty, if they continu'd ob-

minate, after one or two Admonitions, they were to delate them to the Minister, that the Censure of the Church might pass upon them. Which is much the same with the Parochial Elders in the Church of *Scotland*. We find also in the *Polonia Consensus*, that those of the *Bohemian* and *Augsburg* Confessions in *Poland*, had such Elders as above-mention'd. And it is very well known, the Protestant Churches of *France*, *Geneva*, *Switzerland*, *Germany*, and the *Netherlands*, have such Elders.

Here 'tis proper to observe, that *St Ambrose*, in his Commentary on *1 Tim. 5.* says, 'The Synagogue, and afterwards the Church, had Elders, without whose Advice nothing was done in the Church; but by what Neglect they were laid aside I know not, except it were by the Laziness, or rather by the Pride of the Teachers, while they alone would seem to be all.

As to the *Ceremonies* in difference betwixt us and the Church of *England*, 'tis well known that the Churches last mention'd have none of them: And it was the receiv'd Judgment of all the Protestant Churches, That Rites and Ceremonies should be left at Liberty; but they absolutely reject'd such as were equaliz'd or preferr'd to the Divine Precepts. And the *Bohemians* in the 15th Article of their Confession say, They only retain such Rites and Traditions as promoted Faith, the Worship of God, and nourish'd Peace and Concord among the People; but did not think the same Rites and Ceremonies necessary in all Churches, but severely condemn such an Imposition of 'em as might hinder the Performance of more weighty Things: Nor did they think they should be a Cause of Christians hating and contemning one another. And we find the Rites us'd among them were only the observing of some Holy Days and Fasts.

The *French* Confession, in their 33d Article says, They exclude all human Traditions and Laws, which under Pretence of the Worship of God, are impos'd to straiten Peoples Consciences, and admit only such as serv'd to nourish Concord, and retain People in due Obedience.

The *Belgick* Confession in their 32 Articles says, We reject all Humane Inventions, and all Laws introduced into the Worship of God, to straiten or ensnare the Conscience, and retain only such as are fit to nourish Concord, and to retain People in Obedience to God.

The Confession of *Czenger* in *Poland*, Prop. 47. and 48. approves only such honest and pious Rites, as agree with the Word of God, and promote his Glory and the Edification of the Church. And since in the Old and New Testament the Mode of Ministers Apparel for common use is not circumscrib'd or limited, they say 'tis foolish and impious to make those whom God has appointed Heirs and Lords of all Creatures, Servants to superstitious Garments, Meats and Drinks.

The *Augsburg* Confession in their Article *de potestate Ecclesiastica* declares against the Power of Bishops to introduce new Modes of Worship, or Ceremonies and Laws concerning Meats, Holy-days, and Orders or Degrees of Ministers. And charge the contrary Opinion with occasioning such an increase of Traditions, Holy-days, Ceremonies, &c. as oppress the Doctrine and Righteousness of Faith.

The *Saxon* Confession in the 20th Article concerning Traditions and Rites appointed in the Church by Humane Authority, declare against the Power assum'd by Bishops to institute new Modes of Worship, to oblige Mens Consciences, and against the Opinion of the Necessity of such Ceremonies which burdened Mens Consciences and the Churches.

The *Wirtemberg* Confession in their Article concerning such Ecclesiastical Ceremonies, declare against such as are brought in to shadow forth the Truth already reveal'd by the Gospel; such as lighting Wax-candles, to signify the Light of the Gospel, or using Crosses to signify the Victory of Christ by the Cross.

The Churches of *Poland* in their *Conciliatio Articuli de Cana Domini*, &c. in the *Harmony of Confessions*, left Rites and Ceremonies at liberty, and say, It was not material what Rites were observ'd, so that the Doctrine it self, the Foundation of our Faith and Salvation, remain'd pure and uncorrupted; and therefore they left those of the *Bohemian*,
Augs.

Augsburg and *Helvetick* Confessions in their Dominions to their own Rites and Modes of Worship: And in the 6th Act of the Synod of *Cracow*, upon the Question, Whether the Ceremonies at the Lord's-Supper should be uniform in all their Churches, they concluded that Ceremonies should be left at liberty, according to the Custom of the Primitive Church. However they advis'd their Brethren, who sat at the Lord's-Table, that they should leave that Ceremony to the *Arian* Anabaptists, *because they deny'd the Lord that bought them, and plac'd themselves upon the same Throne with him*; but they own'd the thing to be lawful in it self, and ordered that the Supper should be administred in their Churches to the People *standing or kneeling*, but with a Protestation against the Altar-Worship of the Papists. Tho' this proceeded from their commendable Zeal against the *Arians*, they themselves give a sufficient Answer to the Objection, since they might as well have taken it sitting, with a Protestation against the *Arian* Impiety, as they took it kneeling with a Protestation against the Popish Idolatry; but however that is, it rather makes against the imposing of it by our Brethren of the Church of *England*, since they know we scruple it, lest we should be thought to symbolize with idolatrous Papists in their Worship. And indeed considering that the Church of *England* in her 34th Article declares, That any particular or National Church has Power to change or abrogate Ecclesiastical Rites or Ceremonies, appointed only by Humane Authority; it's strange that she should not, for the sake of so numerous a Body as the Protestant Dissenters, have abrogated the Ceremonies in Controversie betwixt us, and especially since the Generality of those Dissenters declare, That they cannot in Conscience comply with any thing appointed as a term of stated Communion, which is not warranted by the Word of God.

And it is really as strange that submitting to the English Prelacy should have been kept up as a Wall of Partition, to keep the Dissenters from Ministerial Communion with the Church of *England*, since that Church did approve the *Helvetick* Confession that so positively asserts an Equality of Power and Function between Bishops and Presbyters, which

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is known also to have been the Opinion of her greatest re-forming Bishops.

We shall only add concerning Rites and Ceremonies, the Opinion of the *Belgick* Churches in their Chapter *about set Forms* from their Book above-mention'd, intitl'd, *A Consideration of certain Controversies*, &c. wherein they express themselves thus.

' We reject such Forms of Prayer, and Administration of
' Sacraments, &c. which, for the Matter of them, are vi-
' tious; for we may not in Prayers, and other Parts of the
' publick Worship of God, propound any thing unlawful,
' impertinent, and unfitting, which savoureth of Supersti-
' tion, Idolatry, or Heresie, or Carnal Prophaneness, and
' Pomp of the World, and which introduceth a Commu-
' nion with the unfruitful Works of Darknes. And for
' this Cause we reject the Ceremonies and Forms of publick
' VVorship introduc'd in the Church of *England*, in these
' last corrupt times by the Hierarchical Bishops; as which, be-
' ing superstitious and idolatrous, did deface the Church and
' VVorship of God, and obscure the Brightness and Beauty
' of a Glorious Reformation; and a Church which takes
' up superstitious and idolatrous Ceremonies, partakes in Su-
' perstition and Idolatry.

Having thus exhibited the Judgment of the Foreign Pro-
testant Churches in general, as to the things in Controver-
versie betwixt us and the Church of *England*, we shall
now give the Judgment of the Church of *Geneva* in parti-
cular upon that Subject, when the *English* Dissenters, to
whom they wrote, labour'd under a grievous Persecution,
and were far from being in a Condition to dazzle their
Eyes with Temporal Grandeur, or to gain their Approbati-
ons by any other Worldly Respects; and as we doubt not
but the present Church of *Geneva* will grant that their Pre-
decessors here quoted, were Men whose Judgment deserve as
much Regard as their own, so we wish they had taken the
same Precautions in delivering their Judgment, that their fa-
mous Reformers did in delivering theirs, and not have af-
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forded a Handle to our common Adversaries to insult over the *British* Presbyterians, who have given sufficient Evidence to the World by their Sufferings, that they are such by Principles deduc'd from the same Texts of Scripture, upon which the *Geneva* Reformers, the *French*, *Helvetick*, and other Churches above-mention'd, declar'd themselves also Presbyterians, and not upon Humane Authority, or a Prospect of Temporal Interest, with which their Dissent from the Church of *England* is known to be inconsistent.

THE

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OF THE
Ministers of Geneva
TO CERTAIN
Brethren of the Church of *England*,
CONCERNING SOME
CONTROVERSIES in their Ec-
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BEing very earnestly and frequently requested by some of our dear Brethren in *England*, that we would in their Calamitous State, give them our Advice for the Ease of their Consciences. We defer'd satisfying their Request a long time for weighty Reasons, and assure the Readers, that we should be glad still to have kept Silence, could we in Conscience have rejected the Suit of our Brethren, which

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they have so often inforc'd, and repeated with most grievous Complaints.

The Causes of our so long Silence were, as on the one part, we had no manner of Doubt of our Brethren's Veracity, but that they had sincerely given us the true State of the Case ; so on the other part we thought it hard for us to suspect, and much more to perswade our selves, that such Persons as Bishops could do things so much out of the way of their Office.

Further, what are we that we shou'd determine such Causes ? For allowing it were lawful for us, either by Authority or by the Consent or Request of either Party, to pronounce Sentence in this Controversy, yet it were very Unjust for us to determine it, if either of the Parties be Absent, or not heard.

In the last place, we were afraid, lest by our Counsel, how Honest soever it may be in it self, this Wound might be rather fretted than heal'd ; for it seems to be of such a desperate Nature, that Prayers and Patience are the only proper Salve for it.

Since then, by the repeated desires of our Brethren, we have been, with so much difficulty, prevail'd upon to give them some sort of Advice : We do hereby protest, that we so give it as it may no wise prejudice the other Party ; and much less as if we challeng'd to our selves a Power to be Judges over any Man. Therefore we desire, in the Name of the Lord, all those into whose Hands these Presents may come, not to be offended at it, but to assure themselves, that what we write is done with Simplicity and Faithfulness, as the Case is stated to us, that the Consciences of our Brethren who desire it, may be thereby made more easy ; for altogether to reject their Request, wou'd have in us been a Breach of Charity.

Therefore taking the Case to be so as it is stated to us, we do with all plainness and honesty give our Judgment in these Questions as follows.

First, 'tis demanded of us, *Whether we can approve this Disorder, in calling Men to the Function of the Ministry, viz. That the Multitude of those who sue for Orders shall be enroll'd*

roll'd in the Ministry, both without the Consent of Elders, and appointing a certain Cure to them; and that upon a slight Examination of their Lives and Behaviour, the Bishop at pleasure shall give them Liberty to Preach the Word of God for a time prescrib'd, or otherwise only to rehearse the Church Service.

We answer, that such a way of calling Ministers, whether we consult the Word of God or the best approv'd Canons of the Church, is by us esteem'd to be altogether unlawful; though at the same time we know that half a Loaf is better than no Bread. But we beseech God, from the bottom of our Hearts, to bestow upon the Kingdom of *England*, a lawful and ordinary way of Calling Men to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments; for if that be obstructed or hindred, the Benefit of the Doctrine of Truth must of Necessity vanish in a little time, or else be maintain'd by some strange and supernatural Means.

We do further, in God's most holy Name, make it our humble Request to the Queens Majesty, that with Her whole Heart, She may endeavour a Reformation in this Matter, wherein the Fundamental Security of the Church and State of *England* does consist.

We do also with Tears, beseech those great Men, who are of Her Majesties Privy-Council, and those, who without doubt have, by the special Mercy of the Great and Good God, succeeded to the Popish Bishops, that from the same Place, whence overthrow and destruction did issue, they would utterly destroy that Tyranny which hath thus overturn'd the Church of Christ. And we crave of them, in the awful Name of God, before whose dreadful Throne of Judgment we must all stand, that with all Consideration and Remembrance of the Years past, and in the Conscience of what belongs to their Duty and Charge, they would devote and apply their Diligence, in finding out Means to accomplish this Thing, and in perswading Her Majesty to agree unto it: And we hope they will not give over till this be accomplish'd, since God has bestow'd upon them such an extraordinary Mistress and Sovereign, from whom they cannot but hope for all Excellent and Princely Things, unless they be wanting to their own Cause.

But some will ask, How shall we do in the Matter till then? In truth, if the Case were ours, we would not accept the Function of the Ministry upon those Conditions, if it were profer'd to us, and much less would we sue for it. Yet we exhort those Men, to whom God hath given Entrance by this way, to the Inlarging the Glory of his Kingdom, that in the Fear of God they abide in it with Courage; but on this Condition, that it may be lawful for them to exercise their whole Ministry in a Holy and Religious manner; and that they may also propose and press those things in their Cures which belong to the Advancement of its better State. But if otherwise they be deprived of this Liberty, and so requir'd to connive at manifest Abuses, as to approve those things which ought certainly to be redress'd. We can advise them to nothing, but to retire to a private Life, rather than against Conscience, to nourish a Mischief which necessarily carries with it the Decay of all the Congregation. Yet we hope that the Queens Majesty, and so many Honourable and Good Men, will use their Diligence in such sort, that Liberty may rather be granted to the Consciences of so many Godly and Learned Brethren, than that these horrible Mischiefs should insue, *viz.* That the Pastors of the Flocks shou'd be constrain'd, either against their Consciences, to do that which is Evil, and so be chain'd to other Mens Sins, or to resign their Ministry; for the third Necessity that will insue this, *viz.* That they should exercise their Ministry against the Will of the Prince and Bishop; we tremble to think of it, for Reasons so obvious, that there is need for us to express them.

2. We are also desir'd to answer plainly and truly, *Whether we allow the Distinction appointed, in wearing Copes and Garments, as well for common Use, as for the Ministry.* We do therefore directly answer, that the Case being as we understand it, the Authors of this Distinction deserve very ill of the Church, and shall answer it at the dreadful Bar of Christ's Tribunal, for tho' we think that order in Politicks, by which not only Citizens, but the Degrees of Functions are noted and distinguish'd, is not wholly to be discom-

discommended ; yet we do not think that every Mark or Note of Distinction is straight way to be us'd. For put the Case, that the Minister were commanded to wear a Fools Py'd Coat, or the Garment of Vice made use of in a Play, would it not be a manifest Contempt and Derision of the Ministry ? Yet in truth those who use those other Garments, and the Apparel commanded, seem to do worse than so, because God hath not only expos'd this Priest-like Apparel to be laugh'd at as foolish by many of the Papists themselves, but 'tis also certain that it is polluted and defiled with infinite Superstitions. We know some Men will plead its Antiquity, we deny not that it is old, yet the Apostolical Simplicity in which the Church did flourish, is certainly more ancient than this. And to those who dive further into those Matters 'twill appear plain enough, that those things which did afterwards serve for Notes and Marks of the Ministry, were at first common and usual among the People, whence then does it come to pass that things being alter'd so long a Season, that this strange and foreign Habit should be retain'd.

Does it not proceed from a bad and unprofitable Zeal ? But some will say, these things are indifferent. We grant indeed they are so, if consider'd simply in their own Nature, and separate from all other Circumstances ; but who is it that does so consider them, for those who are still Papists, whatever the Law may pretend that enjoins them, are thereby confirm'd in their Superstition, with which they are so much overgrown, and those who so zealously abhor Superstition, as to detest all Monuments and Relicks of it, are thereby offended and wounded ; and for those who are further and better learn'd, what Profit and Fruit do they reap by it.

Further, Is this Difference and Mark of distinct Functions of such importance, that the Consciences of so many People should be disquieted with it, especially since the Reason and Purpose of it newly set a foot, is taken even from those that are the manifest and sworn Enemies of sound Doctrine ? What's the meaning of it, that those who are said to be Ecclesiastically brought up, and are not the least part of the Ministry, are said still to have Popery in their

their Breasts? Are they like to have profited more by restoring this Habit, or do not they rather lift up their Crests in hopes of having Popery restor'd? If any object the Circumcising of *Timothy*, and other such Instances, we pray them earnestly to consider what *Paul* would have said, if any would have made a Law, That every Minister of the Gospel shall be constrain'd to wear the Garments of *Pharisees*, or to preach and administer the Sacraments, and circumcise their Children in the Apparel of prophane Priests; notwithstanding some Colour of Reason might be alledg'd for such a Law; to what end are these things brought in; for however at first they might be tolerated till they could be gradually taken away, yet being once remov'd out of the Churches, we dont see with what Conveniency they can again be restor'd to possession: Therefore we must repeat what we said before, that we cannot allow this Device, nor hope for any good from it, but shall be glad to submit if better Reasons be offered us.

What, then will the Brethren say on whom these Things are impos'd, Do you judge we are to do in the Matter? We answer, That here we must distinguish, for the Case of the Ministers, and the Case of the People is not the same; and further, many things may, nay, and ought to be born and tolerated, which are not however justly commanded.

1. Therefore we answer, That tho' we judge those things not to be rightly restor'd to their Possessions and Congregations, yet since they are not in their own Nature impious and ungodly, we do not think them of such weight, that the Pastors should rather give over their Functions than receive the Apparel, or that the Flocks should refuse the publick Food of their Souls, rather than receive the same from Shepherds so apparel'd; only that the Shepherds as well as their Flocks may not sin against their Consciences, and on condition that the Purity of Doctrine it self remain untouch'd: We do perswade the Ministers, that after they have both before the Queen and the Bishops, eas'd their own Consciences by a modest Protestation, as becomes Christians, who do not seek after Sedition and Tumult, and yet with that Gravity which the Importance of the Cause requires, they do
openly

openly in their Parishes; still insist upon those things that may serve to the utter removing of this Stumbling Block, and that as God gives them occasion, they apply themselves to correct those Abuses with Wisdom and Meekness, but yet rather to bear those things which they cannot immediately change, rather than by forsaking their Congregations give Satan opportunity to stir up greater and more dangerous Mischiefs.

As to the People, so long as the Doctrine remains sound, we do exhort them, notwithstanding all those things, diligently to hear the same, to use the Sacraments religiously, and to cry unto God after a serious Amendment of Life, until they obtain from him a full Reformation and Amendment of the Church.

But if Ministers be commanded, not only to tolerate, but also to allow those things as lawful by their Subscriptions, or else by their silence to encourage such things; all that we can advise them to is, that after having witness'd their Innocency, and try'd all means in the Fear of the Lord, they should lay down their Functions, because of this open Injustice; but we hope for better things from *England* than those Extremities.

3dly. 'Tis demanded of us, *What we judge of the trol-ling and discanning of the Psalms, crossing of Babes that are to be baptiz'd; of the Demands in Baptism, of the round unleavened Wafer-cake, and of kneeling at the Lord's Supper.* We answer, That kind of singing seems to be the Corruption of the pure ancient Service, by which the Church did glorify God. And for crossing of Babes, whatever the Practice was in ancient times, yet 'tis most certain that in these days it is so abominable by the fresh Memory of the superstitious Use of it, that we judge those Men to have certainly done well, who have banish'd that Rite out of the Church, since we do not know it to be of any profit. For the Demands in Baptism, we doubt not but they crept into the Church by the Negligence of the Bishops, who suffered the same Form to be made use of in baptizing of Infants, that was us'd at the first laying the Foundation of the Primitive Church in baptizing of Adult Persons: This we may also perceive by

by many such things still in use in the Popish way of Baptism. Wherefore, as the Cream and Charm us'd in Baptism, are by God's Laws abolish'd, tho' they were very ancient, in like manner we wish those Demands, which are both vain and foolish, should also be laid aside, tho' St. *Augustine* seems to approve it in one of his Epistles by a forc'd Construction.

The Bread, Whether it be made with or without Leaven, we think not worth contending for, tho' we judge it more agreeable to Christ's Institution to have the same Bread at the Communion which is us'd at the common Table; for our Lord us'd unleaven'd Bread, because at that time, wherein he thought fit to institute his Holy Supper, not one Man in *Jewry* us'd any other: Therefore we must either restore the Jewish Feast of Unleavened Bread, or else it must be allow'd, that it's better to use the Bread commonly made use of at Table, according to our Saviour's Example, tho' the Bread that he then took was unleavened. For the Practice of the Primitive Church, which the Greek Church does still retain in this Matter, we pass it over in silence.

Kneeling at the very time of receiving the Sacrament, has, in it, a shew of Godly and Christian Reverence, and might therefore be profitably us'd in ancient times; but because from this Fountain issued the detestable Use of Bread worship, which still is impress'd in many Peoples Minds, we judge it to have been very justly abolish'd by the Church: Therefore we beseech the most great and good God, to instruct the Queens Majesty and Bishops in such Methods, as may be most necessary for the perfect doing away of all those Dregs at once. In the mean time, because those things are are not in their own Nature idolatrous, it is our Opinion, that they ought to be so dealt with, as we advis'd in the things immediately preceeding.

4th. It is demanded of us, *Whether we do allow that Baptism which is administred by Midwives.*

We answer, That we not only disallow that Baptism as we did the rest of the things before-mention'd, but we judge it also intolerable, for it proceeded from the Ignorance of the very use of Baptism, and of the publick Ministry of the Church,

we do therefore judge that Ministers are oblig'd sharply to rebuke this Abuse, and by no means to look upon this false Baptism to be good and firm. The Reasons why, have been frequent declar'd by the Learned on our side, and we are also ready to declare them.

5th. It is also reported to us, *That the Keys of binding and loosing are made use of in certain of the Bishops Courts, neither by the Sentence and Judgment of the Elders, which that Church hath not yet receiv'd, nor according to the Word of God: But by the Authority of certain Lawyers, and such like Persons; nay, more frequently by the Authority of one only Man, and that also for such kind of Actions as relate only to Money, just as was practis'd in the time of Popery.*

We answer, That to us it is almost incredible that any such perverse Customs and Examples should be us'd in that Kingdom, where they have the Purity and Soundness of Doctrine. For the right of excommunicating and binding Offenders, will never be found to have been in the Power of any one Person, but belongs to the whole Eldership, and from which, even the People, were not rashly excluded. This Custom of hearing Suits, after the manner of Lawyers, proceeded from Contentions about Livings, which fell to the Bishop's Charge through the Corruption of Times. For that place, where the Apostle speaks of Days-men and Umpires, as at *Corinth*, is nothing to the purpose where the Magistrate is a Christian. It was never the Apostle's Design to burden the Eldership with hearing such Causes as were merely Civil. It's true indeed, that in the ancient times of the Church, Bishops have had the Determination of such Controversies, not for any Authority they had so to do, but because of the importunity of the Suiters, and then also they determin'd them only as Umpires and Days-men; and even among those Bishops, to whom this Respect was shew'd, they did govern themselves with greatest Prudence that chose rather to follow our Saviour's Example, who refused to be a Judge in dividing the Father's Estate between two Brothers, or in determining a Case of Adultery, though both were propos'd to him.

Therefore if any thing contrary to this be done in *England*, we are not to think that a Man is more bound before God, by any such Sentences and Judgments, than by Popish Excommunications; and we wish that that Court for tormenting Consciences, and which is so loathsome a profanation of Ecclesiastical and Spiritual Jurisdiction, might be immediately abolish'd by Her Majesty, as well as the Corruption in Doctrine. And that Elders and Deacons may be restor'd, and set up according to the Word of God, and Canons of the pure Church, which if it be not done, we are very much afraid, that this thing alone will be the beginning of many Calamities, which we pray God to avert: For 'tis most certain, that the Son of God will one Day from Heaven severely Revenge those manifest Abuses, with which the Consciences of our Brethren are perplex'd, except they be speedily redrest.

In the mean time, what is not well done by one Party, may, as we think, be well enough tolerated by the other Party, who are oblig'd to bear what they cannot change: Yet so as they do not allow the things themselves to be Good, but only redeem themselves from unjust Trouble by Patience. But if they must be forc'd not only to tolerate these things, but also to approve this way of Excommunication as lawful, and constrain'd to demand unlawful Absolution, and to Assent to this manifest Abuse: We exhort them rather to suffer whatever may be inflicted upon them, than to act in this Matter against their Consciences. But to what end is all this, for we promise our selves much better things than these; nay, even the best of Things of that Realm, in which the restoring of the Christian Religion has been Seal'd and Confirm'd with the Blood of so many excellent Martyrs. Only we fear what hath befallen many other Countries may also happen to *England*, to wit, that because Fruits meet for Repentance are not brought forth, an angry God should double their Darkness, and take the Light of the Gospel from them. This is the Design

sign of our daily Sermons, and we think it ought to be that of all other Ministers; especially at this time, that they chiefly advance this Principle of the Gospel, which relates to earnest Amendment of Life: For this being attain'd to, undoubtedly the Lord shall give both Counsel and Zeal, and all things else which are necessary to perfect the Reformation of the Church already begun. And above all, we Request, and humbly beg with Tears, that our Good and Reverend Brethren of the English Churches, setting aside all bitterness of Mind, which we verily fear hath had a Hand in this Matter on both sides, would particularly bear and suffer each other, so long as the Purity of Christian Doctrine, and soundness of Conscience does remain, willing to obey the Queen's Majesty, who is full of Compassion, and all other Prelates. And finally, that with all Concord of Minds in the Lord, they manfully set themselves against Satan, who seeks all occasion of Tumults and infinite Calamities, yea, although they have not the like Judgment of all sorts of Prelates at first. God is our Witness, that the Design of this our Writing is not, that either Party should use it against the other; for we don't send it you as an Apple of Contention, but have declar'd our Judgment simply in these Matters, as upon a suppos'd Case, being overcome with the continued Requests of our Brethren. And we join our Prayers daily to those of the Godly on that side the Sea, that it may please the most merciful God, out of his Compassion to Man's Frailty, to direct the Queen's Highness, the Nobles of *England*, the Prelates, and every Workman of this Spiritual Building, with his holy Spirit most effectually, so as the Work of the Lord so frequently begun and so frequently stop'd, may be happily set forward, to the great Quiet and Concord of all Men, that not only the old Corruption, but also all the Monstrousness of Errors, which Satan seeks a new to bring into the Church again, may at length be utterly driven away. Which we pray God, the most loving Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, his Eternal and Consubstantial Son, to bring to pass, through his Holy Spirit, in which Three Per-

sons, we profess one God, and not divers, ought to be
Worshipped for ever. *Amen.*

At Geneva, October 24. 1564.

Your Brethren in Christ, &c.

Theodorus Beza, &c
Jo. Gaiagnazius.
Ge. Favergius.
Jo. Parnilius.
Slm. Golerlius.
Cor. Barlierdus.
Remundus Calvetus.
Jo. Tremlerus.
Car. P.

Kuds Faverius.
Pet. Carpenterus.
Hen. S.
Nicholaus Coladonus.
Johan. Pinaldus.
Egid. Causcus.
Urb. Calvetus.
Fransc. Portus.
Abden Dupleus.

T H E

THE
Answer and Judgment
OF
Mr. J O H N C A L V I N,
Pastor of G E N E V A,
Concerning the English
Book of Common-Prayer,
After he had Perus'd the same.

To the Godly and Learned Mr. John Knox, and Mr. William Whittingham, his Faithful Brethren at Frankford, &c.

IT truly grieves me exceedingly, and is a great Shame, that Contention should arise among Brethren, banish'd and driven out of their Country for the same Faith; and for a Cause, which alone ought to have tied you together by a Holy Bond, in this your Dispersion. For what could you do better in this doleful and calamitous State, when drove from your Country by Violence, than to procure your selves a Church which might Receive and Nourish you, (being join'd together in one Mind, and speaking the same Things) in her Motherly Bosom? But for some Men to contend now about Forms of Prayer and Ceremonies,

Ceremonies, as if you were in Peace and Prosperity, and to make that a Hindrance to your Joining in one Church, is, in my Opinion, very unseasonable.

I must notwithstanding, approve the Constancy of those who contend for a just Cause, being thereunto forc'd against their Will. And I do justly condemn the Frowardness of such as hinder and put a stop to a holy Care, for reforming the Church.

And as I behave my self gently and tractably in mean Things (such as External Ceremonies) so I don't always think it Profitable to yield to the foolish Stubborness of those, who will forsake nothing of their old Customs. In the Liturgy of *England*, I perceive there were *many tolerable Trifles*, by which I mean, it had not that Purity which ought to be desir'd. Those Faults, since they could not at first be amended, yet seeing they had nothing of manifest Impiety, they were for a Season to be tolerated. Therefore it was Lawful to begin with such Rudiments or Alphabets, but so as it behov'd the Learned, Grave, and Godly Ministers of Christ, to advance further, and to publish something more Polite and Pure. If Religion had flourish'd till this Day in *England*, there ought to have been a Form better Corrected, and many Things quite taken away. Now when those Beginnings are overthrown, a Church must be set up in another Place, where you may freely make a new Order, such as may be apparently most commodious for the Use and Edification of the Church. I can't tell what those People mean, who delight so much in the Remainders of Popish Dreggs. They love things to which they are accustomed. But first, this Book is both Trifling and Childish, and in the next place this new Order differs very much from a Change.

Therefore, as I would not have you behave your selves with Fierceness to those whose Weakness will not suffer them to ascend higher, so I would advertise the others not to please themselves too much in their Foolishness; nor by their Frowardness to put a stop to the holy Building: And in the last place, not to suffer themselves to be carried away by Vain-Glory: For what Cause have they to contend, except

cept it be, that they are ashamed to give place to better Things. But I speak in Vain to them, who perhaps esteem me not so much, as to vouchsafe to admit the Council that comes from such a Hand. If they fear an ill Report in *England*, as if they had fallen from that Religion, for which they were banish'd, they are much deceiv'd; for this true and sincere Religion will rather oblige those who remain there, to consider into what a deep Gulph they have fall'n, and their Apostacy will more grievously Wound them, when they perceive you going forward beyond the middle Course, from which they have turn'd away. Farewel dearly beloved Brethren, and faithful Servants of Christ, the Lord Defend and Govern you.

From Geneva, Jan. 22. 1555.

Yours,

John Calvin.

The

The CONCLUSION.

NO Man can be Ignorant, who knows any thing of the History of Non-conformity, that many Things have happen'd since the Publishing of those Confessions and Letters, that make the Objections of the *English* Dissenters much stronger than they were then; for which we refer to Mr. *Baxter's* English Nonconformity, Mr. *Calamy's* pieces upon that Head, and to the History of Non-conformity, publish'd in 1704. containing the Debates at the *Savoy* by Commissioners on both sides, thereunto appointed by King *Charles* the 2d's Authority. Had our Brethren of *Geneva* consulted those Writings, we have Reason to think they would have been better advis'd, before they had given any thing of a Judgment or Approbation, in Favour of our Adversaries: But it is our Comfort, that it is not by the Judgment of Man, but by the Judgment of God in the Holy Scriptures, that we must Stand or Fall; yet at the same Time, it is no small Satisfaction to us, that we are encompass'd with such a Cloud of Witnesses as the foreign Protestant Churches here adduc'd, who fairly determine for us.

It is not without Regret, that we find our selves oblig'd to enter into these Controversies at such a Time as this, when by the Union betwixt the Nations, the Church of *England* and Presbyterian Government are settled by the Civil Authority, upon an equal Footing in South and North *Britain*: But being oblig'd, by Apostolical Precept, to give an Account of our Faith, when it is thus demand- ed, and when we are in so publick a manner provok'd to it, we hope no moderate Man will blame us for it.

F I N I S.

